



Success Story

**U.S. Small Business Administration
North Carolina District Office**

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Mi-Co, Inc. – Research Triangle Park, NC

SBIR Funding Success for Software Engineering Business

Electronic forms, U.S. National Institute of Health and a \$100,000 SBA Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) are a successful combination of ingredients for Mi-Co, a tech firm based in Research Triangle Park.

Mi-Co was founded in 1999 and created out of a merger in March 2000 when a software engineering business emphasizing handwritten forms capture joined a hardware business. Both businesses were owned by Greg Clary and Jim Clary. Mi-Co currently has a tech staff of 17.

Mi-Forms offers a unique way to electronically capture, store, recognize and communicate handwritten information traditionally entered on paper forms. We can adapt existing paper forms and provide customers with digital writing solutions using Tablet PCs, Digital Pens, Pocket PCs, and other handwriting capture devices. Mi-Forms patent pending technology recognizes and transforms the handwritten images into data with audio and visual feedback to the user, populating existing databases and automatically eliciting any required follow-up actions. Mi-Co's digital form technology is applicable to any type of business that uses paper forms.

Organizations spend over \$360 Billion a year manually converting paper based data into computerized information that can be used by the enterprise. Converting the data in an efficient and effective electronic manner provides real value to Mi-Co's customers.

Mi-Co's current customers include businesses in healthcare, local government, federal government, financial services and entertainment. Clinical trials is an obvious candidate for Mi-Forms Software because the cost and time to market for new drugs can be greatly reduced by using electronic data capture for drug trials. The firm was able to use the SBIR project as a "proof of concept" in the clinical trials field.

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Jim Clary, Mi-Co's President, learned about SBIR program opportunities through his work at Research Triangle Institute.

"The North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center's (SBTDC) Annual SBIR Conference at the NC Biotechnology Center in December 2002 was the first time we gave serious consideration to applying," said Clary.

The information obtained at that conference enabled Mi-Co to put together a winning proposal. Mi-Co soon afterwards submitted an SBIR application to National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health because they had a broad solicitation for a contract on "Capturing Forms Data with Handheld Devices".

"The SBIR solicitation was a perfect fit for our goals," said Greg Clary, Mi-Co Chief Technology Officer and Principal Investigator on the SBIR proposal. "We were able to involve investigators at a local research and teaching hospital to do the actual experiments using a variety of handheld devices (Tablet PC, Digital Pen, and Pocket PC) determine which methods produced the best results."

The Annual SBIR/STTR Conference is always a great event for learning about SBIR and STTR opportunities. The SBTDC hosts several other proposal writing workshops and accounting workshops through the year which Mi-Co has attended. All of these events are very helpful with the details of writing and submitting and maintaining successful SBIR programs.

The SBIR program can provide baseline funding for Research and Development activities that are so critical to any technology business. In Mi-Co's case, the company has strong science behind their marketing messages, and the SBIR program has significantly strengthened our position.

More information about Mi-Co is available at: <http://www.mi-corporation.com/>.

More information about the NC SBTDC and all of its programs is available at: <http://www.sbtcd.org>.

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